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Newsletter  
**FinNALA**

Finnish North American Literature Association

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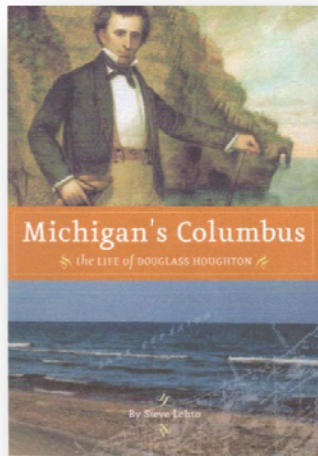
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**FinNALA's creative writing contest** is under way. Judges have submissions and will announce winners shortly. Check the FinNALA website for updates.

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Cover, *Michigan's Columbus*, by Steve Lehto

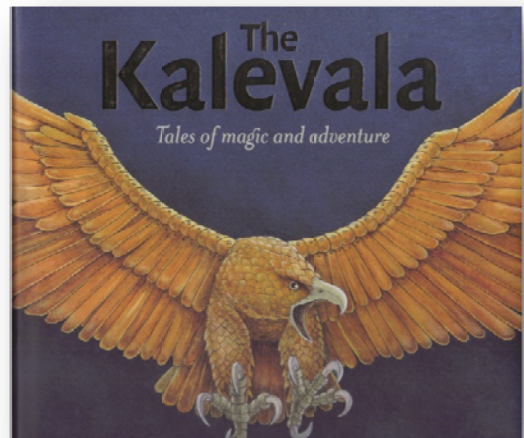
**Michigan's Columbus: The Life of Douglass Houghton** by Steve Lehto (Momentum Books) is named on the Michigan's Most Notable Books List for 2010. This well-researched and readable biography details the extraordinary - and tragically short - life of one of the most important figures in Michigan history. Having earlier accompanied Henry Rowe Schoolcraft on his expeditions through the Lake Superior region and the upper Mississippi valley, Houghton was the state's first geologist, from 1837 until his death at age 36 in 1845. His 1841 annual report detailed the rich copper

deposits found in the Keweenaw Peninsula, and, by suggesting they could be mined successfully and profitably, helped foster Michigan's subsequent mining boom. This is Lehto's second time on the Michigan Notable Books list (*Death's Door: The Truth Behind Michigan's Largest Mass Murder*).

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**Kaarina Brooks' translation, *Kalevala – Tales of Magic and Adventure***, has won the 2009 Award from the American Folklore Society award. Kirsti Mäkinen's original work, *Suomen lasten Kalevala* [Finland's Children's Kalevala], translated by Brooks as *The Kalevala – Tales of Magic and Adventure* is available from Simply Read Books, a publishing company from Vancouver, B.C.

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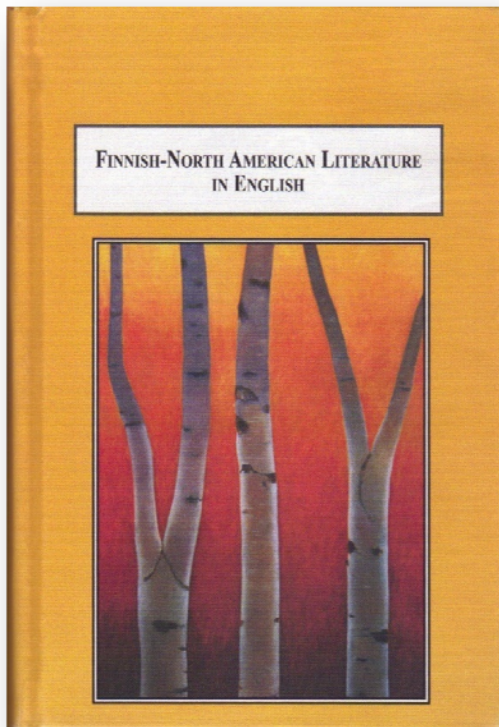


Brooks' *Kalevala*

***The Collected Short Stories of Ernest Hekkanen: Naturalistic, Modern Gothic, Surreal & Postmodern, Volume One*** (427 pages) is now available from New Orphic Publishers (for \$28.00). The fall, 2009 issue of *The New Orphic Review*, entitled "Story Autopsy," has nearly sold out (what a surprise).

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**Finnish-North American Literature in English: A Concise Anthology**, edited by Beth L. Virtanen is available from Mellen Press. Check the FinNALA website at



Cover, *Finnish-North American Literature in English*, Beth L. Virtanen, Editor

[www.finnala.com](http://www.finnala.com) for the author flier to order a reduced-price copy. The anthology containing works by twenty authors writing from the mid to late twentieth century, including early work from Emil Petaja and

Shirley Schoonover, to works by contemporaries such as Jim Johnson, Diane Jarvenpa, Sheila Packs, Kirsten and others. It will retail for \$169, but direct orders may be placed for \$49.00 plus shipping.

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***Echo & Lightning: poetry chapbook by Sheila Packa with audio CD with cello by Kathy McTavish*** is available from Wildwood River. Chapbook, \$10 and CD, \$5, or both for \$15.

Ellie Schoenfeld, author of *The Dark Honey* writes: "These poems are the story of following one's own instincts to, in one way or another, migrate. They bring us to the exact moment when we surrender to our truest selves, when we allow ourselves to be transported, transformed, and resurrected. In these poems this occurs with the ease and necessity of taking one breath, letting it go and then receiving another. These are ecstatic poems. They are at once ethereal and profoundly grounded in the body. This has always been one of Packa's greatest strengths and every piece in this collection is an awe-inspiring testament to that gift. These poems can help us find our way to the places we most need to go, to where "...music you haven't heard/didn't know you needed/opens deep." "

For more information, see Sheila's web space at [www.sheilapacka.blogspot.com](http://www.sheilapacka.blogspot.com)

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**Poet/performer Josef Aukee's** new studio recording *Afterbeat* is set for a February 2010 release. It includes popular works from his live performances and selections from his book *Town and Country*. Check [josefaukee.com](http://josefaukee.com) for online sales information or listen to samples at [reverbnation.com/josefaukee](http://reverbnation.com/josefaukee).

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**The Journal of Finnish Studies**, now at Finlandia University, is publishing a full-color special issue on the *Kalevala* for its second issue of 2009. It is expected to appear early in 2010 with cover art by Marjatta Tapiola. The issue is supported by the venerable Kalevala seura (*Kalevala Society*) of Helsinki. The issue will contain several articles on the *Kalevala* by internationally renowned scholars.

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**Diane Dettmann's book, *Miriam Daughter of Finnish Immigrants***, continues to reach a broader audience of readers. An article about the Kaurala family's story and the process of writing the book was recently published in *The Woodury Bulletin*, a local newspaper in the twin cities. The book also received a wonderful review in *The Hibbing Daily Tribune*, and on November 16th Diane was a featured author at two events in northern Minnesota.



Diane Dettman at Woodward's Bookstore

Diane enjoyed talking about her family's story with readers as she autographed books at Woodward's Bookstore in Virginia and Howard Street Booksellers in Hibbing. The book is listed as a "Midwest Favorite" in the Midwest Booksellers Association catalog that

goes out to independent bookstores throughout the Midwest. Purchase a copy of *Miriam Daughter of Finnish Immigrants* at your local bookstore or on line at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com). Also available by mail order. Send check for \$15.00 plus 2.00 shipping and handling to Diane Dettmann, PO Box 36, Afton, MN 55001-0036.

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## **Riches**

*By Burt Rairamo*

We sat in a restaurant  
My friend Sid and I  
He asked

Would you wish for any other meal  
Than what you are having now?

No

Is there anything you wish  
You presently don't have?

No

Where would you wish to go  
on vacation?  
What country?

No country. Here.

Then you must be rich  
You have everything already

Yes, I thought

--

## **Belly Poems Series**

*By Jim Heikkinen*

### ***Painted Turtle***

The turtle pokes his  
head up through the scum;  
the ripples reach  
the far shoreline.

-

### ***Commute***

Wet fart<sup>8 8</sup>  
Go to work anyway

Will I get  
fired today?

-

### ***Job Corps Counselor***

At the desk all day  
belly full of  
swarming sharks!

-

### ***Four Winds Redux***

Remembering the hospital  
tears form  
in my gut  
mix with red sand<sup>8 8</sup>  
my wife & children  
such sadness

-

### ***Trying to Oversleep***

Daughter kicks me  
in the face  
rolls on her back  
sleeps on

-

### ***Road Breakfast***

Chew toast slowly.  
The tires vibrate unevenly:  
the road to White Sulfur Springs

-

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## **Where Is My Flock**

*By Burt Rairamo*

Where is my flock  
My guiding star

I run like a deer  
I fly like hawk  
I howl like a wolf

The moon is bright  
Ice is slippery beneath my paws  
The wind is bitter

Where is my flock  
Where is my birch  
My star

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## **The First Illuminated**

### **Christmas Tree**

*By Burt Rairamo*

Large white fluffy flakes of snow were slowly and gently descending, drifting quietly from the sky ... all around. The grayish, white smoke from the fireplace chimney ascended in a counter flow to the snowflakes, occasionally sending some of the snowflakes on a merry sleigh-ride to some distance away from their path. The flurried sky of the night competed with the clear and starry nights of the town's other nights. The millions of individually shaped and designed snowflakes threw their silent challenge to those stars whose glory they had borrowed this one night. Nature was pulling tight the corners of the white blanket she had placed over the town that night for its rest and peace.

Quiet, peaceful houses, blanketed in a snowy whiteness, greeted me as I approached them. At first glance, they stood motionless,

as if devoid of any life. However, I could feel they were filled with an inner peace, the kind that comes from a job well done. Faint yellow lamplights from nearby homes radiated a warm glow, searching and reaching out into the night, and whispering a salutation to me. “We are at peace here” they wanted to tell me. “We are not just houses. We are homes. We are proud to be homes for our townsfolk. Ours is an honorable profession.”

Two aging gray taxis, almost fully covered in snow, stood motionless, resting empty from the travail of the day in the comforting shadows of a century-old gray fieldstone church. It was located at the heart of the old town center, at the fork of the main roads leading in and out of town. The grayish blue shadows of its building warmed their fingers in the flickering glow of the yellow light of the nearby lampposts, the light that just barely reached the fringes of the shadows.

Tiny old colonial-type cottages, partly covered with snow, encircled the church on all its sides, giving the place a feeling of an ancient hamlet within the town. It was difficult to distinguish the details of the cottages against the backdrop of snow, as all the homes were painted white, but I could see that these cottages were held up by ancient, melancholic gray stone walls. Dormers, like two bulging eyes from the gabled roofs of the cottages, peeked at the passing stranger. From the end-chimneys ascended a gray woody smoke, like a giant snake making its way up through the flurried skies. Snow was piled deep on top of the bell-shaped roof extensions spanning over the pleasant-looking porches.

These old worker’s homes gave me a feeling that they were reminiscing and recounting stories to one another of bygone

days, the era of grand ships, the ship building days and festive market days, days when churches were full, and other similar snowstorms of the past.

I could almost hear them say: “You are witnessing that our old culture is still thriving and flourishing here, away from the big cities and outside forces. We are happy to live here. We live in harmony and peace with our past, with our hopes and dreams, our visions and aspirations. Tonight we embrace you as one of our own, and we let you in . . . .”

I could almost swear that the warm, yellow glow of the street lights and the lamplights shining from the windows of the entire hamlet now smiled at me.

The town had closed its doors for the night and its inhabitants had gone to sleep early. As long as one cares to remember, Monday nights were customary the nights to stay at home in this town. Only one lonely stooped figure silently trudged through the falling snow, staring straight down at his feet as if seeking redemption from the snowy path.

The fluffy, gentle, falling snowflakes gave the town an air of Christmas, of many Christmases past. Spellbound by this tranquil night, I could almost hear the distant sleigh bells and echoes of the verses of “Silent Night” or “The Christmas Tree” of those bygone days.

The evening was so magical and serene, and breathed such genuine peace, that I felt certain that something had indeed touched and spoken to me in Tracy-Sorel. I certainly felt that the town’s beacons of welcome had been extended to me, a visiting stranger, as if they wanted to wish me a pleasant stay.

When I returned to my lodgings for the night I began a conversation with the night clerk about my pleasant visit to his town that night, and how it had given me a feeling of Christmas. He then told me that I was certainly right in my feeling.

There was something very special about this place because it was here in Sorel that the first Christmas Tree was illuminated in North America on Christmas Eve of 1781. A local baroness hosted a party for British and German officers that had come as mercenaries to fight the American revolutionaries. The sensation of the evening had been a fir tree in the corner of the dining room; its branches decorated with fruits and lit with candles. The first illuminated Christmas Tree had come to the Americas.

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## **I Can Not Escape from It**

*By Burt Rairamo*

I can not escape from it  
A smell of freshly cut pine  
Scent of lilacs  
Like a wisp of wind  
At times like a bolt of lightning  
Sometimes like a flash of sunshine  
When it strikes  
Small fragments of memories  
-----of Finland  
Not enough to re-enthrall me  
But enough to rekindle an ache  
Enough to make me wonder  
What if...

-

***FinNALA Newsletter editing team:***

Beth L. Virtanen, Editor

Sirpa Kaukinen, Associate Editor

## **My Machine Needs Foreplay and Pillow Talk**

*by John Byk*

Frozen fingertips and sharp, frigid wind forces me into a cuss state of mind. It is a nice machine and I keep it chained and covered in my backyard, anxiously awaiting winter to test it out. Apple red and sleek features that I admired and ran my hands over, priming her for the moment. She's a stubborn beauty. Just like some women I have known. Sometimes hard to start, slow to warm but hot to the touch in full throttle. I coax her back out of her resting place, turn into the shin high drifts in my driveway and grit my teeth against Windego's first arctic blow of the season. Wheels spin and stick in the snow, I slam her into high gear, determined to dig out.

Push ahead. Stop. Adjust the thrower with a lever grip that makes me feel like an astronaut working through a space suit. Now it rocks. We move forward together, man and machine, undaunted, relentless. Hunched over her in focused will.

At the driveway's edge, I thrust her deep into the chunks pushed onto my property by the county snowplow. She sputters and stalls. I cuss and crank. Cuss and crank, trying to turn over the engine again, bring her back to me. No go, so I wheel her around and push the monster back through the snow. My heart pumping fury. My breath heavy and white in front of my face. Stinging wind in my eyes so I lower my head and push on until I reach my back door and hook up the electric start from the kitchen. A loud, sick grinding noise from the engine. Brand new and broken already? Check the gas dummy. Sometimes brains beat brawn. And so it is with women also.

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## After the Harvest

By *Lisbeth Holt*

After the harvest, the days are shorter, clearer;  
Leaner is the fare set before me but keener.  
No bright sun obfuscates the malleable mind,  
Nor shifting clouds conceal what lies behind.

Autumn reveals branches stripped clean;  
No fluttering leaves dissemble the scene.  
Stark, somber, cool nights have arrived;  
Candor yet bittersweet regret survive.

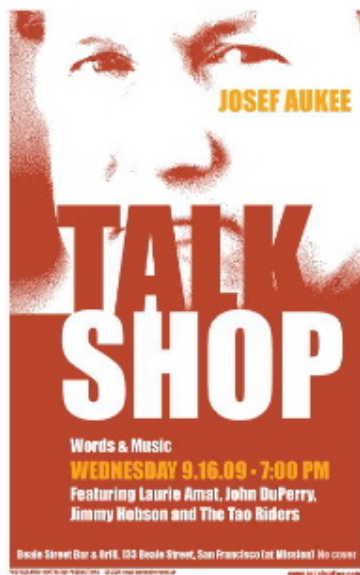
This then is the season of acceptance;  
Folly laid to rest beside old deception.  
Just these laurels from challenges met,  
And summer's roses in pages pressed.

Once Psyche persevered to win the prize  
As I, too, have done and now realize  
The harvest had been written in the stars:  
I never gave up the quest, trusting my heart.

After the harvest, the days are mellow wine;  
I quaff the amber liquid in gentle time.  
How dross becomes gold is the mystery  
Of this season's secret alchemy.

--

Lisbeth looking fabulous in Guatemala



Josef Aukee Poster

## Winter Winter Winter

By *Josef Aukee*

Wet wet wet  
Cold cold cold  
Dark dark dark  
Eat eat eat  
Sleep sleep sleep  
Drink drink drink  
Shop shop shop  
Sled sled sled  
Melt melt melt  
Fire fire fire  
Ski ski ski  
Hot cocoa or tea?

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